



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Karen F. Morton, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, January 8, 2013

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2013-0012 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings of December 4, 2012 and December 11, 2012 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2012-0342 FYE 2012 CAFR

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance; Cindy Landry, Town Treasurer; Vanessa Rossitto of Blum Shapiro; and Carolyn Dickey, Business Manager for Groton Public Schools were present to address the Council. Mr. Pandolfo noted the audit documents that were previously distributed to Councilors. The audit is required by the Charter. The State requires that the audit be published within six months of the end of the fiscal year. The audit is a communication and information document that provides a snapshot of what happened in the Town of Groton during the fiscal year.

Ms. Rossitto began her overview by noting that Blum Shapiro has given the Town an unqualified or clean opinion. Everything is correctly presented according to accounting standards. She directed Councilors' attention to the following information:

p. 3 - Management discussion and analysis prepared by the Director of Finance.

p. 18 - General Fund Balance is \$12.7 million with \$9.4 million unassigned (7.5%).

p. 20 - There was a slight decrease in the General Fund Balance from the prior year. The

refunding of bonds transaction is detailed on p. 51.

p. 63 - Budget to Actual Statement for the General Fund.

p. 68 - Comparative Balance Sheet. Encumbrances decreased from 2011 reflecting the Town's new encumbrance policy.

Councilor Flax questioned the desirability of raising the Fund Balance. Ms. Rossitto noted that the GFOA recommends 5-15%, but whether or not to raise the Fund Balance would be a better question for the Town's bonding agent.

Councilor Morton asked about Town encumbrances and Ms. Rossitto referred her to p. 47. Mr. Pandolfo directed Councilor Morton to p. 68 noting a reduction in encumbrances from \$1.4 million to \$1.2 million, with \$557,000 attributable to the Town and \$665,000 to the Board of Education.

p. 18 - The Capital Improvement Fund Balance is \$6.5 million. The School Construction Fund Balance is \$213,000.

p. 86 - Internal Service Fund balances: Fleet Reserve \$3.8 million; Health Insurance \$8.3 million; Workers Compensation Fund \$518,000.

pp. 25-26 - Fiduciary Funds: Pension Trust \$86 million; OPEB \$6.2 million

Councilor Flax asked if the Pension Trust Fund is rated. Mr. Pandolfo explained that the Town's pension fund is about 80% funded (noted on p. 56 of the audit). Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that the Town's retirement fund is in much better shape than other municipalities. The Town was over 100% funded until 2008 when the stock market decline occurred.

Mayor Somers questioned the MM&E reimbursements.

Ms. Rossitto then addressed the federal and state single audits, which are required because the Town receives grant funds from the federal and state governments.

p. 4 of Federal Single Audit - Blum Shapiro tested four grants and had one finding on a Title 1 grant (p. 11). The Board of Education is required to file a financial report (form ED1-41) with the state and the form needed a significant adjustment. A management response was provided.

p. 4 of State Single Audit - Blum Shapiro tested three grants and there were no findings.

Management Letter - Mr. Rossitto reviewed two comments. 1) With respect to construction in process, the auditor recommended establishing a new process for reconciling capital expenditures in the fund financial statements and the CIP reported in government-wide financial statements. Mr. Pandolfo noted the comment has been addressed. 2) For the Board of Education year-end cut off procedures, encumbrances were carried over into the 13th period. The auditor recommended procedural/software changes.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0005

Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2013 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Interim Superintendent John Ramos, and Board of Education members Bob Peruzzotti and Shelly Gardner were present.

Mayor Somers explained that she wants to make sure that the whole Board of Education wants to move forward and hire Milone and MacBroom as facilitator for the School Facilities Initiative Task Force. Mr. Peruzzotti noted that Board members are all on the same page and having voted on redistricting, they are ready to support the task force. Mr. Ramos will be submitting the redistricting plan to the state on February 6th. One positive that will be presented to the state is that the task force is in motion. Mr. Peruzzotti suggested that the state is more likely to adopt the redistricting plan because the work is not ending.

Mr. Peruzzotti noted that the Board would like to provide their priorities to the Task Force.

2012-0238**School Facilities Initiative Task Force****Discussed**

Mayor Somers suggested that the School Facilities Initiative Task Force meet on Tuesday, January 29th.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Antipas, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0011**Groton Long Point Request for a Supplemental Appropriation****Discussed**

Councilors received two packets of information provided by Groton Long Point. John Touhy and Rich Moravsik from Groton Long Point were present. Mr. Touhy explained that this request relates to cost associated with tropical storm Irene. The first packet of information addresses the clean-up of roads and sidewalks and the second packet is for repairs to the retaining wall. FEMA reimbursed 75% of the expenses and Groton Long Point is asking the Town to pay for the remaining \$20,879.21.

Mayor Somers stated that she is struggling with the fact that the Town can provide the services that Groton Long Point has paid contractors for and she feels the Town should be given the opportunity to remove debris. If Groton Long Point chooses to hire contractors, the Association should pay for it. Councilor Morton agreed noting that cleanup work was started as soon as the rain stopped making it appear that Groton Long Point contracted with someone to be on standby. Other Town residents rely on Public Works. Councilor Morton acknowledged that Groton Long Point has the right to bring in contractors for immediate service, but it is not appropriate for the taxpayers to bear that expense. Councilor Streeter noted concern with the considerable tipping fees paid by Groton Long Point's contractors when the Town transfer station was made available free of charge. Mr. Touhy stated that he did use the Town facility for super storm Sandy. Councilor Flax expressed support for paying the expenses this time, but he cautioned that moving forward, Groton Long Point cannot act as if it is an island; it is part of a larger community. He added that he cannot support paying for contractors hired for super storm Sandy.

Mr. Touhy stated that Groton Long Point received no offers or a comprehensive plan of what the Town would do for Groton Long Point. Mr. Moravsik stated it is a unique situation in Groton Long Point because there are beaches and other areas that need attention. The hired contractors were able not only to clear the roads, but to remove trees and move large boulders. Councilor Flax asked about emergency planning and discussions among all three entities. Mr. Touhy stated he would be happy to have that discussion with the Town. Mr. Moravsik stated that the contractor rates paid by Groton Long Point were not excessive and were acceptable to FEMA. He suggested that the rates be compared to the Town rates. Mayor Somers suggested that if Groton Long Point wants the Town to pay, then they must give the Town the opportunity to do the work.

Councilor Johnson asked about the Town's response to Groton Long Point's claims. The Town Manager noted that the Town Council had not resolved this issued by the time super storm Sandy

hit. Before Sandy, the Town conducted a pre-storm survey and contractors were pre-positioned in Groton Long Point. The Town did not reach out during the storm because it was evident that Groton Long Point had taken care of their area.

The Town Manager explained that he is unable to tell from Groton Long Point's documentation if the costs are associated with the roads or to determine if the Town is even responsible for the retaining walls. This is a policy decision for the Council. The Town is responsible for making an annual contribution. It is subject to interpretation what 'annual' means and whether or not it includes supplemental appropriations. The Town Manager stated that he does not have an appreciation for the amount of damage in Groton Long Point because he was restricted from entering the area.

Councilor Peruzzotti noted that based on the FEMA memos, outstanding amounts are for the retaining walls (balance \$6,900) and tree removal (\$13,964). She feels the Town is very capable of providing assistance to Groton Long Point after a storm. She indicated a willingness to provide 25% of the retaining wall balance. She suggested that in the future, Groton Long Point work with the Town and spend as little money as possible to get things done. Councilor Schmidt agreed that it is fair to reimburse for the retaining wall noting that if Groton Long Point is not willing to wait for the Town's services, the Town should not pay for it.

Councilor Watson asked about the tree removal plan for Groton Long Point and Mr. Moravsik stated that most of the trees have been removed as a result of the storms.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Antipas, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilor Streeter expressed his opposition to the invoice for cleaning up south beach because it is not a highway. Mr. Touhy stated that not one invoice is associated with a beach. Every invoice was scrutinized by FEMA for months.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to amend the motion to reimburse Groton Long Point in the amount \$6,914.40 for retaining wall repairs.

The amendment to the motion failed by the following vote:

In Favor: 2 - Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt

Opposed: 7 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Morton, Councilor Watson, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Streeter

Councilor Watson stated he would like to see some kind of policy discussion and procedure put in place for Groton Long Point with respect to disaster procedures. Mayor Somers made the referral to the Committee of the Whole.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 4 - Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 5 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter

A motion was made by Councilor Antipas, seconded by Councilor Flax, to reimburse Groton Long Point \$10,000.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 4 - Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 5 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter

Recommended for Deletion

2012-0343

Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that SCCOG recently completed a regional hazard mitigation plan that includes a separate annex for each municipality. In order to receive funding from FEMA for enhancement projects, the Town's legislative body must adopt the plan. In order for SCCOG to get reimbursed for the cost of preparing the plan, all towns must endorse the plan.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Morton, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0013 Regional Performance Incentive Program Grant**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger explained this is the third year that the state has provided funding to Councils of Government for regional projects. Two projects have been proposed by SCCOG. The first is to identify which services towns are willing to consider on a regional basis. The second is to get a handle on the emergency equipment available in the region. The state requires that each municipality adopt a resolution endorsing the projects. Discussion followed on the challenges of undertaking regional projects.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0175 FYE 2014 Budget Process**Discussed**

The Mayor and Councilors discussed holding a pre-budget public hearing and meeting with the City and Groton Long Point before budget time. Councilors supported a pre-budget public hearing. A tentative date to meet with the City, Groton Long Point, and the Board of Education was identified as January 22nd as part of the Committee of the Whole meeting.

Mayor Somers asked Councilor Watson raise the issue of a joint meeting with the Board of Education at the Liaison Committee meeting the following night, and also to discuss the best method for informing the Board of Education about meetings since there appears to be a communication breakdown.

2013-0014 Pfizer Update**Motion**

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that the Town Council, along with Town Manager Mark Oefinger go into Executive Session at 7:40 p.m. pursuant to General Statutes 1-200 (6) (E) and 1-210 (b) (B), to discuss commercial and/or financial information provided in confidence and related to the Pfizer property.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 8:20 p.m.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.